DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 346 IR 015 288

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TITLE SCORING: Bibliographic Instruction Helps Freshman Athletes Compete in the Academic League.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at a Conference on The Freshman Year Experience: Teaching (Kansas City, MO, April 11-13, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *College Athletics; *College Freshmen; College Libraries; Higher Education; *Library Instruction; Library Research; Library Skills; Self Esteem
IDENTIFIERS *University of Central Florida

ABSTRACT

Motivated by accreditation standards, sanctions, legal, and other issues threatening American collegiate athletic programs, academia has put into place, on many campuses, structured programs which attempt to ensure both academic achievement and the physical prowess of its "players." As a component of the overall support program at the University of Central Florida, the university library has designed an instructional program for freshman athletes that goes beyond the basic introductory lesson taught to freshman composition classes. More advanced library research skills such as the nature of various literature formats, information sequencing, characteristics of bibliographic organization, contextual analysis, and time management are included. This game plan is intended not only to increase academic performance, but also to foster self-confidence and self-esteem in the athletes' ability to compete in the academic league. (8 references) (Author/DB)

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SCORING: Bibliographic Instruction Helps Freshman Athletes Compete in the Academic League

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by Phyllis L. Ruscella

Motivated by accreditation standards, sanctions, legal, and other issues threatening American collegiate athletic programs, academia has put into place, on many campuses, structured programs which attempt to ensure the academic achievement, in addition to the physical prowess, of its "players". As a component of the overall support program at the University of Central Florida, the university library has designed an instructional module for freshman athletes which goes beyond the basic introductory lesson taught to freshman composition classes. More advanced library research and critical thinking skills such as the nature of various literature formats, information sequencing, characteristics of bibliographic organization, contextual analysis, and time management are included. This game plan is intended not only to increase scholastic performance but also to foster self-confidence in the athlete's ability to compete in the academic league.

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Student minds are the stakes in a contest being played on many American campuses. The playing field of academia has lined-up an educational team with a scholastic mission and an intercollegiate sports program team with a competitive mission. Intensifying the contest are the involved alumni, media, and athletic department personnel who favor the sports program with financial and professional support and encouragement. Poised between these opposing sides are the athletes. Often identified as having athletic potential at an early age, they spend their youth trying, with increasingly less success, to participate in the competition on both the academic and athletic teams.

With the convergence of declining standards in American education as described in a NATION AT RISK (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1988), and the escalating profits in college sports has come a newfound awareness to the plight of the collegiate athlete. The prior overwhelming emphasis on physical prowess reinforced by questionable recruitment practices and flexible scholastic requirements have instilled unrealistic goals and expectations in this select student audience. Also, an intricate network of commercial and institutional forces, often with family and peers functioning as enablers, deliver the gifted athlete to the college/university arena with little desire or skill for achievement other than for the sports program team.

The recurring column "Athletics Notes" in the Chronicle of Higher Education as well as various other publications dishearteningly report the results of this mismatched competition. The sinking graduation rates and the moral, ethical and legal violations among college athletes collectively have commanded the attention of those in positions of power at all levels of involvement. One attempt to correct the scholastic imbalance and address related societal issues has been Proposition 48, in which the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the governing organization, reaffirmed and strengthened the admissions standards for freshman athletes and member institutions which are beginning to embrace this edict.

A NEW GAME?

Historically, colleges and universities have identified segments of the student population in need of specialized services. This growing list includes such groups as military veterans, minority students, handicapped students, re-entry adult students, honors students, and more recently the English-as-a-second language students (Farrell, 1985). Now, Proposition 48 declares that educational institutions are also "...morally obligated to provide academically weak athletes with superior academic support programs" (Jesudason, 1989, p.14). Institutions with competitive "revenue sports" programs, eager to maintain accreditation and avoid sanctions situations, have taken up the cause of student athletes by providing specialized services addressing their scholastic needs.

UCF Student Athletes Program/Undergraduate Studies

The University of Central Florida is a relatively new higher educational institution. Since the first academic semester in 1968, its enrollment growing pains have parallelled those of the surrounding locale. The U. S. Census Bureau recently listed Orlando as one of America's 40 largest metropolitan areas, recording a dramatic 50% increase in population over the past decade (Mitchell,1979).

Research has shown a correlation between alumni giving and nationally-renowned college sports (Sigelman & Carter, 1979) (See TABLE 1). Thus, the swelling numbers of alumni plus the geographic growth patterns, equal a projected rise in the importance placed on intercollegiate athletics which is already in evidence at UCF. However, the administrative leadership expresses spirited determinism not to wager the institution's academic integrity in order to attract alumni support/dollars (Council for Aid to Education, 1989).

The UCF athletic program took root in the late 1970's, stalled in the early 1980's, and established itself as a respectable intercollegiate competitor in 1985 with the arrival of the current athletic director. UCF, like "...Penn State is one of several universities that, ...have given academic administrators, rather than sports officials, control over their academic-advisory programs for athletes" (Oberlander, 1988, p.40). UCF has adopted a program fashioned after the Penn State model. A skilled, alert professional staff, within the division of Undergraduate Studies, monitors each student athlete's academic career. Naturally, the primary objective is to assist each athlete in achieving "...good academic standing... in accordance with the standards applied to all students" and in "...maintaining..satisfactory

progress" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1988, p.A40), both of which are requisites for NCAA eligibility. To this end, in cooperative effort with the athletic department, the program facilitates academic advisement, career direction, counseling and testing, peer tutoring, and presentations which contribute to the athlete's success in the academic arena. This special student athlete population at UCF numbers 400, one-third of whom are women, participating in seven major sports. For the current academic year, 60-75% of these athletes are on athletic scholarships totalling an estimated $700,000 (Reeves, 1991).

Freshman Athletes at UCF

Of this target group of athletes, approximately 90 are freshmen, unaware of the rigors and perils of collegiate life and competition on the playing field and in the classroom. In order to prevent sports from becoming "...so important to these young people that their personal futures are tossed aside in pursuit of sport" (Lapchick, 1988, p.19), efforts are made to balance their commitment to practice and to study through a mandatory evening study hall. Four nights per week throughout the academic year, not just in-season, these freshman athletes are required to attend a two-hour study hall. Also reassigned to study hall is any upper-division athlete whose GPA falls to a 2.2. It is hoped that focused tutoring, counseling, etc. at this point will prevent any further decline to beneath the 2.0 GPA minimum, which would render the student ineligible to play by NCAA rules.

Similar to the Penn State advising program for athletes, the Academic Coordinator for Athletes at UCF has established a varied program during the study hall sessions. In addition to self-directed textbook study and one-on-one tutoring sessions, also offered are structured presentations on applicable topics like time-management, effective study techniques, career decision-making, and, most recently, library/research skills.

Recruitment of the University Library

Approached by the undergraduate studies program for athletes, the University library eagerly accepted the proposal

to participate in the structured support program for this "at-risk" group. During the early days of Fall semester, 1989, the library director, the library's bibliographic instruction coordinator, and the undergraduate studies academic coordinator for athletes met to discuss the research needs of the freshman athletes and to write goals to meet these identified needs. A time-table for implementation was also agreed upon: two, one-hour sessions within the scheduled evening study hall time frame would be taught by a librarian during the mid-term weeks of the semester. All further development of objectives and lesson content was to be determined by those responsible for the library's bibliographic instruction program.

Profile of Players

Essential to the design of an instructional module is that "...there be an accurate assessment of the existing situation" (Renford & Hendrickson, 1986, p.2) including a defined target audience. Conflicting profiles of the student athlete exist in the literature. At one end is society's "...created image of the 'dumb jock'" dispelled to by Lapchick (1988, p.35) and the "severe educational problems" attributed to them by Jesudason (1989, p.15). Conversely, recent findings of the NCAA president's commission show that college athletes "...devote about as much time to academics as do students involved in other extracurricular activities" (Lederman, 1988, p.A33). The implication is that this group may not be so different from the average undergraduate in study habits and aptitude, given similar time limitations.

Lapchick, a notable authority in the student-athlete field, believes that "The typical student athlete, contrary to the public's image, performs as well or better academically than other students" (Lapchick, 1988, p.36). Institution-specific data supports this conclusion. UCF admissions standards averages for freshman athletes compare favorably with the freshman class averages and NCAA minimum requirements as profiled in TABLE II. Also, officially university reported findings show that "Athletes at the University of Central Florida are performing at a higher level academically than their non-athletic peers" (College Notebook, 1989, p.19) (see TABLE III).

Extrapolating from this, it could be assumed that the 90 UCF freshman athletes are capable of performing well, but experience similar apprehensions and anxieties toward college-level scholarship as do the 2,100 typical freshman on campus. (TABLE IV)

In addition, a UCF Library survey of freshman athletes and the freshman at large, revealed predictable similarities in the two groups. Approximately 60 students from each group responded to a questionaire. Statistics assessing their reading habits and prior library usage indicated that most had written some type of a 5+ page research paper with bibliography, had used a public library in addition to school library, and were accustomed to asking a librarian for help in the past and planned to while at UCF. Two unexpected, differences were that the regular freshman have had more experience with personal computers and computerized library catalogs than their athletic counterparts and that freshman athletes do more reading for enjoyment than does the average freshman. Asked to list specific titles, the athletes' reading was overwhelmingly concentrated in the area of sports publications. This data was valuable in determining the strengths and weaknesses of this BI target audience so that an appropriate lesson could be designed. Appendix I contains some select questions from the questionnaire administered to freshman athletes and freshman non-athletes, with a graphic representation of their responses.

The BI Challenge

Generally speaking, all freshman at UCF take English Composition I and II, and most receive the generic one-shot lesson on the fundamentals of University Library usage, including instruction in the online catalog, LC Classification System, LC Subject Headings, arrangement of serials, etc. Therefore, the freshman athletes would receive this basic library instruction through the BI program already in place, coordinated with individual English professors.

Now the daunting and appealing challenge was to plan two hours of library instruction which would go beyond the basics, incorporate more sophisticated library research techniques and critical thinking skills, and be worthy of the time taken away from study-hall textbook study. Also, because of the UCF survey results, the lesson should incorporate computerized information retrieval techniques and should encourage the broadening of the knowledge base from the current sports concentration.

BI Game Plan

Bibliographic instruction is thought to be most effective when it is course-related and occurs at the moment of need, that is, when the research assignment is made. However, this scenario was incongruous with our freshman athlete study hall situation. Therefore, a more difficult motivating technique became paramount--to inspire interest and

enthusiasm so that students realized "...the maximum demonstratable relevance - to prove in fact that a library session will improve grades and facilitate research" (Hobbins, 1975, p.65).

For project continuity, one BI librarian assumed the planning, design and implementation responsibilities with input from public services/BI colleagues and assistance from a Library Technical Assistant, secretarial and student assistant staffers. Finalizing the logistics included dividing the freshman athlete study hall into thirds, each group of approximately thirty receiving the same two lessons taught in the UCF Library's BI classroom on three consecutive nights during the seventh and eighth weeks of a sixteen week Fall Semester, 1989.

Session One

The first hour/lesson focused on the "big picture"; theoretical concepts such as

- an overview of the evolution of information formatting,
- conceptualization of a valid research topic,
- categorization of types of sources,
- characteristics of bibliographic organization.

In order to achieve these objectives, most of the lesson was formatted as a dialogue, carefully orchestrated by the librarian to strengthen and expand the students' existing research skills. A blank time-line was placed on the board and labelled by student responses to questions, prompted by dates. This sequencing exercise demonstrated why their generation is currently experiencing a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "information explosion". Identification of and relationships among multi-media formatting became particularly apparent to an audience so actively dedicated to visual spectacle.

The conversion of recorded information into knowledge was dramatized by four short statements of opinion delivered by the librarian and generally related to sports. Encouraged to make deductions about the librarian from the information provided, students were able to determine her education, geographic roots, intellectual and recreational interests, and some personality traits. This interplay prompted students too realize how, unconsciously, the human

brain processes bits of information into a total knowledge-base, by making assumptions, drawing parallels, contrasts, relationships, sequences, etc. Then, the logical question was raised: given the quantity of information available in a library, a university and society in general what do I keep, and what do I reject?

Using a modification of Cerise Oberman's square matrix exercise for developing a manageable thesis (1983), the students' input was used to fill in the what, who, when, where, and why categories for the general topic SPORTS. Working in pairs, each wrote a thesis statement/topic sentence by combining possibilities from the completed matrix. In sharing theirs with others, they realized how different each approach to the same general topic could be. This exercise illustrated how one could determine the parameters of an assignment prior to the onset of library research; this initial focusing thereby maximizing the quality and minimizing the quantity of time spent.

The students completion of the matrix exercise raised the issue of "kinds" of information needed to prove or refute a thesis statement. Introduced were reference books for an overview, circulating books for in-depth and retrospective information, and journal articles for current and local information. Since the UCF Library is a U.S. Government Depository Library, federal documents were discussed as a new source of additional information and detailed statistical data.

Finally, after examining the types of sources available, students discussed the four most common ways of organizing information: alphabetical, chronological, numerical, and topical. Listing title keywords such as "encyclopedia", "dictionary", "chronology" alerted students to these as markers used to recognize familiar organizational styles; they are terms which recur in computerized information sources and various non-print formats as well as the more familiar print format.

Session Two

The second hour/lesson was taught by the same librarian, hopefully to sustain rapport and subtly convey earnest intent. A brief review of the four general concepts from lesson one served as a transition. At this point the general became more specific, concrete and practical.

Through the use of a PC, overhead projector, Kodak Datashow, and projection screen, a demonstration of the online catalog showed how to effectively

* select from the subject/sub-topic menu,
* use bibliographic information to determine relevance and usefulness,
* assess ranges of LC call numbers pertaining to specifics of topic,
* determine location of sources within the five-floors of library stacks.

A hands-on activity had pairs of students selecting and using subject-specific indexes to identify relevant articles for sports-related topics assigned by the librarian. After collectively reviewing the elements in an index entry, students completed the exercise by verifying one citation for a journal article through a title search on the online catalog using terminals available in the BI classroom. They checked to see if UCF subscribes to the particular journals from their citations. The location of the four different periodical formats --loose issue, bound, microfilm, microfiche--within the collection was emphasized.

This activity led easily into a brief introduction to CD-ROM databases. Once again using projection equipment for classroom demonstration, common aspects of PC/disk searching were emphasized, such as: "highlighting" commands the machine, function keys offer the options, and displayed records follow the last-in/first out rule of information loading. Using the Business Periodical Index CD-ROM on WILSONDISC software, students were taught to assess a database by asking themselves:

What is the content? (bibliographic v.s. full-text scope)

What is the coverage? (limited date range v.s. comprehensive)

Does it use formal subject indexing? (controlled vocabulary vs. free text/keyword)

Will it combine two subjects? (browse alphabetical list vs. Boolean logic)

Can it generate a customized bibliography on a specified topic? (print select citations vs. all citations)

A follow-up discussion generated feedback about determining when a search is best executed in the print indexes as

compared to the disk databases.

The concluding minutes of the two-hour module were devoted to the usefulness of in-house print materials as guides to a particular library's collection. A specially-designed pathfinder on "Sports" was compiled and distributed as an example of only one in an extensive UCF series of subject-specific bibliographies called "Info-to-Go"s. This reinforced the idea that librarians have done much to streamline the basic research steps for patrons so that they can pursue ideas independently. In closing, the librarian offered personalized research support from a public services librarian by calling her directly for an appointment to work through any problematic assignments.

A Strategic Look Back

The success of the BI project for freshman athletes was measured by the immediate verbal feedback, by written comments about the library experience included on the end-of-the-year evaluation of the overall academic program for athletes, and by the satisfaction expressed by the professionals involved. Many of the players sought out the instructing librarian for additional assistance on term papers. Still others responded positively by reintroducing themselves when they encountered the same librarian at the REFERENCE DESK or when attending another of her BI lessons for a particular course. The loftier, intangible goal of raising self-esteem, or of instilling a balance between the physical and the mental commitment, or of enhancing the quality of the total university experience remains finitely immeasurable.

Rewarded by the accomplishments of the project, all parties responsible favored a second year (1990-91) of implementation. Few modifications to the lessons were necessary. The pacing of the lesson content was somewhat adjusted, and the print and visual support materials were refined. Otherwise the skills taught were initially intended to be generic enough to encourage students to adapt them to any assignment and apply them in any library facility.

Conclusion

A columnist in TIME magazine recently said that "...sports fans crave the illusion of a guaranteed future" (Goodgame,

1991, p.27) --they want to believe that a team will always have a winning season. Perhaps toward that seemingly reasonable, simple end, the public, the corporate complex, the professional organizations, the education system, and even the athletes themselves have compromised the future of the sports participants. The widespread abuses evidenced in intercollegiate athletes have incited a call for reform which could be interpreted more positively as a chance to offer opportunity (Lederman, 1990).

Academic standards for athletes have been redefined, endorsed and laid at the doorstep of college/university athletic departments and administrators. The responsibility now is to afford student athletes the opportunity to succeed equally in both the sports arena and the academic arena. This necessitates consciousness-raising and collaborative efforts at all levels. As a member of the university educational team, the academic library should participate in campus-wide efforts to sustain the scholastic achievement of its athletes. And what better place to begin than at the beginning, with the fresh-men and women, recruited to play a sport AND enrolled to earn a college degree.

Bibliographic instruction, which incorporates basic skills with more sophisticated strategies and critical thinking processes, can teach students to conduct effective and efficient research. Skill in the selection, manipulation, and synthesis of information serves not only to improve the athlete's academic performance but also to foster self-confidence in his/her own ability to compete in the academic league.

The interplay of many factors can ensure victory in life long after the player's glory days in organized sports are over. But that success depends, in part, on academia's ability to convert an "at-risk" student into an "active-learner", equipped not only with factual knowledge but also with a knowledge of how to find information. In a comprehensive assessment of the humanities in American education, a survey in Boston unexpectedly showed "...events by non-profit cultural groups drawing more than twice as many people as professional sports events" (National Endowment for the Humanities, 1990, p.43). Hopefully, in years to come, former athletes/college graduates who have been guided through intellectual as well as athletic pursuits, will be members of both audiences.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Derek Bok, Universities and the Future of America (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

Peter Golenbock, Personal Fouls (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1989).

John W. Graham, "Where to Find College Sports Information," RQ 28 (Spring 1989): 381-391.

Carol E. Kirshnit, Mark Ham, and Maryse H. Richards, "The Sporting Life: Athletic Activities During Early Adolescence," Journal of Youth and Adolescence 18 (December, 1989) 6: 601-615.

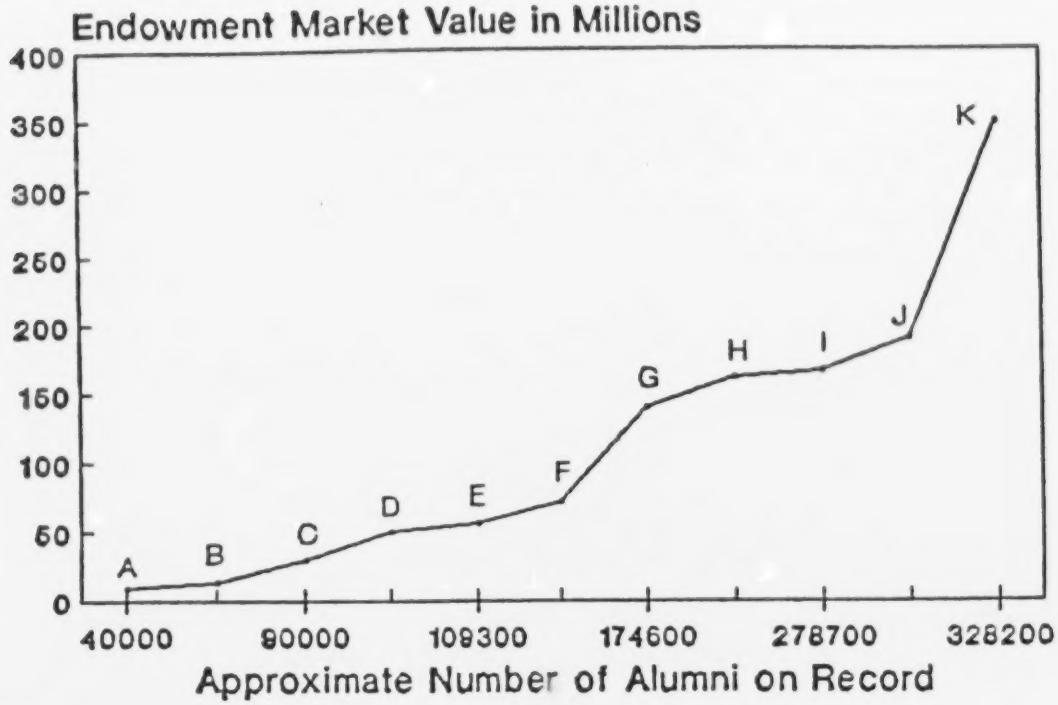
Gordon B. Leighton and Marsha C. Markman, "Attitude's of College Freshman Toward Bibliographic Instruction", College & Research Libraries News 52 (January, 1991) 1: 36-38.

Raymie E. McKerron and Norinne Hilchey Daly, "Student-Athletes in Search of Balance," National Forum: The Phi Kappa Phi Journal 71 (Fall 1990) 4: 42-44.

National Endowment for the Humanities, Humanities in America: A Report to the President, the Congress and the American People (Washington, D. C.: U.S. GPO, 1988).

Barbara S. Vehling, "Take Athletes Out of College?," AGB Reports 23 (May/June 1981) 3: 15-19.

Alumni Support

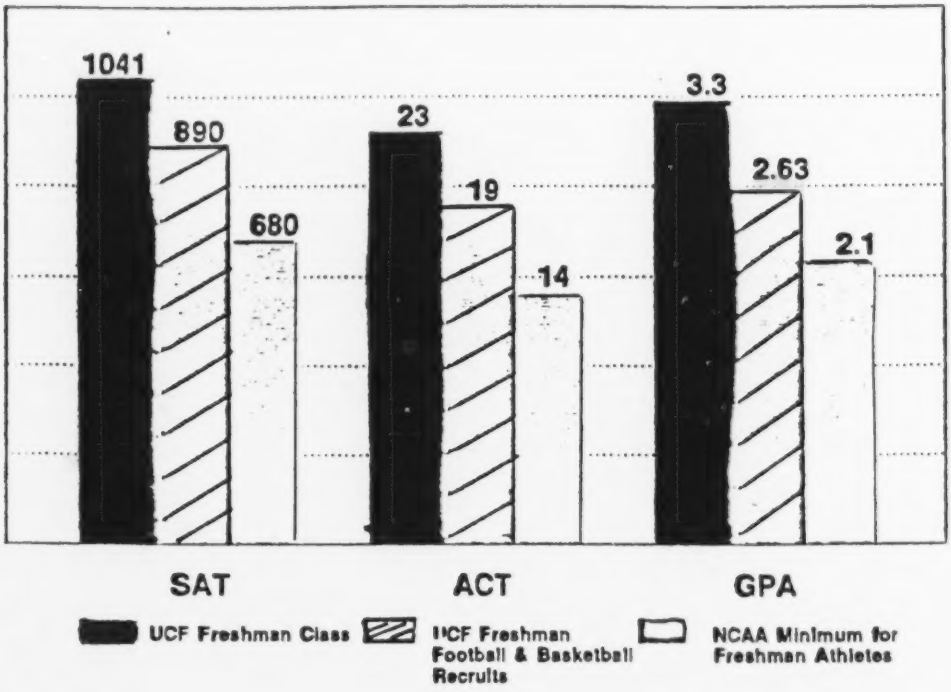


KEY

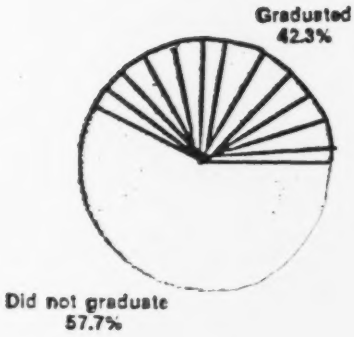
Select Institutions (Public)

*A	U of Central Fla	F	U of Alabama
B	U of No. Dakota	G	U of Florida
C	U of Akron	H	U of Tennessee
D	U of Kentucky	I	Penn State U
E	Ohio U	J	Indiana U
		K	U of Michigan

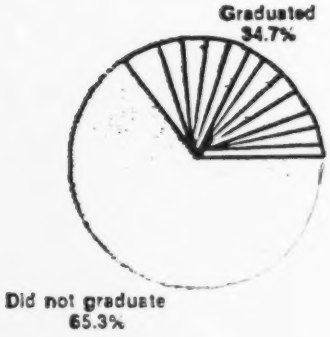
ADMISSIONS
1988-89



UCF GRADUATION RATE
1988-89



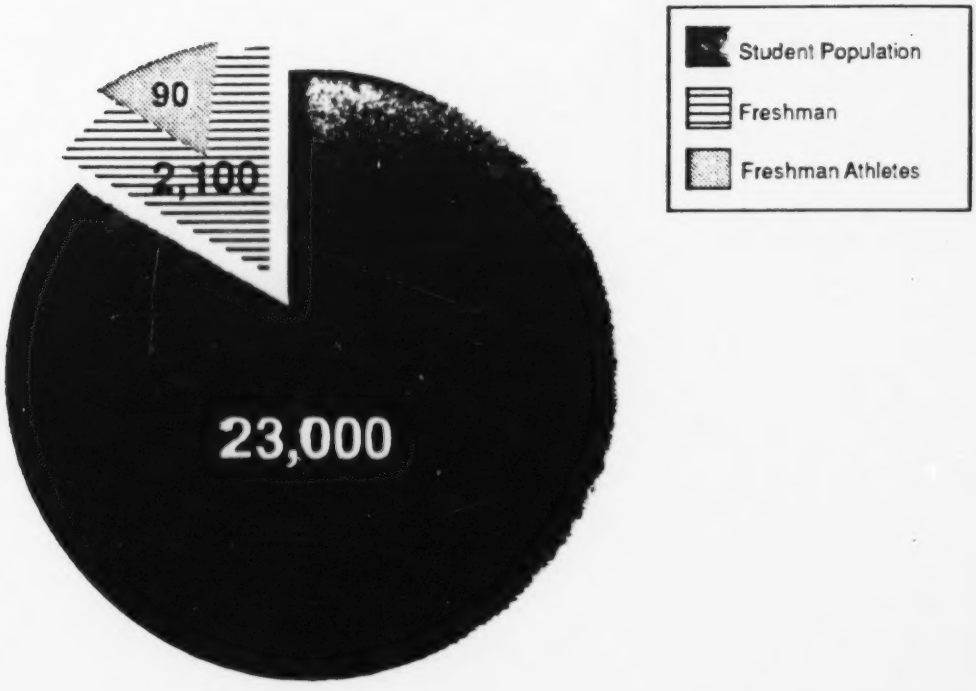
Recruited Athletes
1983-84 Academic Year



Overall

University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida

UCF Student Enrollment
1990-1991



APPENDIX 1

U.C.F. Library Survey 1990-91

SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS:

RESEARCH SKILLS

Have you ever...

A) Asked a librarian for help?

B) Written a lengthy research paper?

C) Used a public library for a school assignment?

D) Used a periodical index such as READERS' GUIDE?

E) Used a PC (personal computer)?

F) Used a computerized library catalog?

READING HABITS

G) Do you read the newspaper regularly?

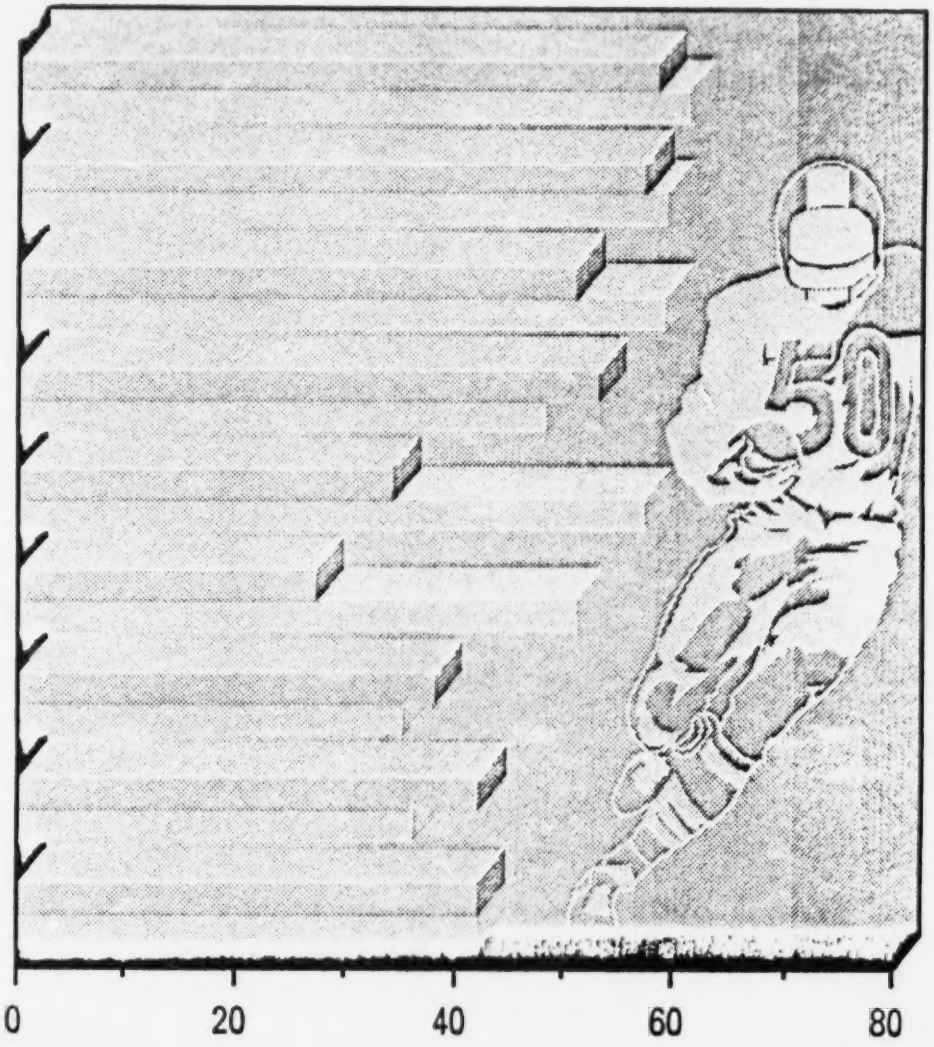
H) Do you read any magazines regularly?

I) Do you expect to use the UCF Library for reading for enjoyment such as books, magazines, newspapers, etc...?

SAMPLING

61 Freshman athletes

63 Freshman (non-athletes)



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, ORLANDO, FLORIDA